

VZCZCXRO0414  
PP RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR  
DE RUEHPG #0158/01 0471509  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 161509Z FEB 07  
FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8600  
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 1822  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRAGUE 000158

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

EUR FOR PEKALA, EUR/NCE FOR GARBER AND FICHTE, EUR/PRA FOR FRIEDT AND AZEVEDO, NSC FOR HAYWARD AND STERLING, OSD FOR IARROBINO AND SADOWSKA, USNATO FOR SHEEHAN AND MALONEY, MDA FOR LEHNER AND JENKINS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/16/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [EZ](#)

SUBJECT: GREEN CHAIR BURSİK OFFERS PRAGMATIC APPROACH ON MISSILE DEFENSE, STRESSES NATO LINK

REF: PRAGUE 146

Classified By: Ambassador Richard Graber for reasons 1.4 b+d

11. (C) SUMMARY: Martin Bursik, Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of the Green Party, assured the Ambassador that he would work to keep his party's position on missile defense flexible. Bursik indicated that, while he is confident he will be reconfirmed as party chair at the February 17-18 Green Party Congress, he faces vocal opposition within the party, not least on MD. The Congress this weekend will pass a resolution calling for a guarantee that the proposed missile defense radar facility will eventually become part of a NATO system. In addition to the NATO link, the party will continue to call for a referendum, although Bursik admits this will not come to pass. Bursik confided that his task is to lead the party through the period of public anti-base protests and intergovernmental negotiations that lies ahead, while maintaining throughout the possibility of accepting the base. END SUMMARY

12. (C) Ambassador met February 15 with Martin Bursik, Chairman of the Green Party, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Environment. While the two discussed briefly internal politics and possible future environmental cooperation, the meeting focused primarily on missile defense (MD) and the February 17-18 Green Party Congress in Prague at which Bursik is running unopposed for reelection. Bursik noted that while he faces no opponent for chairman, that does not mean that he faces no opposition within the party. As discussed reftel, the entry of the party into government for the first time, and in a center-right government, has forced the rapidly growing Greens to confront a number of challenges. MD has been controversial, with the party largely opposed to a bilateral U.S. MD radar facility. Bursik told the Ambassador that the two issues of greatest importance to his party's traditional grass roots base are putting MD in a NATO context and seeking a referendum.

13. (C) On NATO, Bursik read from an internal document produced at a meeting of the party leadership the night before. He said the party will pass two resolutions concerning missile defense during the upcoming Congress. In the first of these, the party will demand that the proposed MD system have some NATO character. The second resolution will say that NATO/European allies must be closely and regularly consulted during the talks with the U.S. Bursik acknowledged that the proposed system can not be a part of

NATO at this time. "We understand there is no willingness on the part of NATO to invest in or build a missile defense system at this time." In response to a question from the Ambassador, Bursik said without hesitation that he would support the MD system if he were convinced that it would, one day, be part of a NATO system. Bursik said the important thing is "attitude," and that the U.S. side needed to demonstrate that it perceives the system could one day become part of NATO.

14. (C) On the question of a referendum, Bursik said he was a realist. He explained that during the negotiations on the formation of a government, the coalition's senior partner, the Civic Democrats (ODS) made it clear that they would not allow a bill calling for a referendum to pass. Nothing about referenda was put into the coalition agreement. Nevertheless, Bursik said, in order to placate his party base, the Greens will go forward with their proposal to create a referendum mechanism. He said the Communists will put theirs forward too, for similar reasons. Bursik emphasized the sensitivity of the issue. "This issue creates strong emotions." He warned us to not underestimate local referenda.

15. (C) Bursik said he understood that the talks on a radar facility would last a long time and that no parliamentary decision would be taken until all the facts are known. He was not willing to predict whether the party would vote as a bloc or whether individual members would vote according to their consciences. He said he wished the issue hadn't been thrust upon the government -- especially the same day the government was given its mandate, as this has distracted the administration from other pressing concerns. He concluded by

PRAGUE 00000158 002 OF 002

acknowledging that he has a tough job ahead to lead his party through the period of negotiations, but assured the Ambassador that he would find a way.

16. (C) Comment: Bursik is an experienced politician who has taken the Green Party from a small disorganized party to a position in government in a relatively short time. He is well aware of the challenges he faces keeping the party together (reftel). Like Social Democratic Chairman Paroubek, he is personally willing to support the MD facility, either because he believes it is a positive step or because he believes it will inevitably win approval. The task for both is to move the debate forward without losing the support of their party base. This means we can expect to hear critical comments coming from both parties at their upcoming Congresses (the Greens this weekend, and CSSD March 23-24), and critical comments from the mouths of both leaders. Both realize that the referendum will not happen, but both agree that some NATO cover is important for their party. When it comes time for parliament to vote on an MD agreement, it is possible that -- in order to preserve the coalition -- Bursik will have no choice but to let his party's six MPs vote their conscience, and surely some would vote against the deal. This is why the GOCR remains so focused on the opposition CSSD, since at least a handful of their votes will be necessary to win a majority in this scenario (Deputy FM Pojar has told us he wants and expects to have at least ten CSSD votes in favor). We expect Bursik to continue to play a pragmatic and positive role in the debate.

GRABER